

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, September 6, 1906

Beinn Bhreagh. near Baddeck, Nova Scotia September 6th, 1906. Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell, 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C., U. S. A. Dear Mabel:—

The only chance of giving you any news is to dictate something.

Douglas McCurdy and I left for Sydney, Wednesday 29th of August to attend the funeral of Mr. Henry McCurdy who succumbed to an operation for appendicitis. I invited Elsie and Prof. and Mrs. Grosvenor to come with me for a little change from Beinn Bhreagh, for Bert and Ed had left them for a weeks cruise in the Alexander.

We left Wednesday morning at 8 o'clock for the Grand Narrows and crawled up to Sydney at the tail of a freight train.

All Sydney was at the funeral. The whole city being in mourning. By action of the Board of Trade the stores were closed during the time of the funeral. Mr. Davidson sent flowers with your card. Mr Grosvenor and Elsie accompanied me to the house but we did not go in, the house being crammed with people, so we stood outside on the veranda during the services. I saw Mr. William McCurdy and Edward McCurdy for a moment. Both seemed much distressed, and Edward looked so ill and broken down, that I could not help thinking that he himself will not be long with us. Douglas went with the family to the grave, and Mr. Grosvenor and I returned to the hotel with Elsie. The Elsie and Mr. and Mrs. Grosvenor went for a drive, while I made up my lost sleep at the hotel.

2

Mr. Grosvenor, as a student of American History was quite excited at the proximity of Louisburg, so we all went down there next day, and Mr. Grosvenor declares it was the

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day of his life wondering among the ruins of the historical fortress. Mr. William McCurdy gave me the name of a gentleman in Louisburg from whom Mr. Grosvenor could get every information concerning the place. We spent Thursday night in Louisburg returning to Sydney Friday evening: Spent Saturday in Sydney and left Sunday morning for Baddeck on the steamer A. W. Perry (formerly the Beverly). I have already written to you about the unfortunate termination of my voyage to Baddeck. You will be glad to know that I am allright now.

Ed Grosvenor left yesterday afternoon for the States. Prof. and Mrs. Grosvenor are still at the Lodge and propose sailing from Hawksbury in a few days. I will try to diswade Will Roosevelt endorse this spelling If not — how would you spell it? bright don't look at a dictionary till after you have spelled it. them from this for I don't think that this is at all the proper season for an ocean voyage. A big storm may be expected at any time.

I have just received a note from Prof. E. A. Fay of Kendall Green which has been forwarded from Edgewood Park, Pa., where the Summer Meeting of the A. A. P. T. S. D. was held last week. I am very much pleased with this note coming as it does from a man of Prof. Fay's experience in statistical work, and so copy it here for your benefit:—

4

The chapter in the Census Report which has struck Prof, Fay's attention and which he desires to reprint in full in the Annals, is OUR CHAPTER—the chapter we wrote together at Colonial Beach while my father lay dying. It was written under the greatest difficulties and I feel much pleased that this chapter, of all others, should have been selected for republication in full. I have a strong sentiment in connection with it. It is associated in my mind with my father's illness and with my little wife's loving help and encouragement , I was so distracted at the time that I do not believe I could have finished it but for your help which supported me and helped me in my hour of trial. Indeed it is your chapter as much as mine. Most of it I think was written upon the floor, upstairs in my father's house at

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Colonial Beach and I am glad that Prof. Fay has picked it out, from the mass of material in the Report, for presentation to the members of the profession through the Annals.

Speaking of Colonial Beach reminds me that I have just received a note from Mrs. Bell enclosing a letter from Elgin addressed by mistake to my father but which was intended for me

It is the first letter I have ever received from a certain young lady pupil in Elgin, Scotland whom I very much admired in the old days when I was a teacher in the Western House Academy in Elgin. In those days she was a very beautiful girl, and was a member of my elocution class in the Ladies Academy where I lectured on elocution and English Literature. She was the spokesman of the class when I left and presented to me on behalf of the class a fine writing desk as a memento.

5

She was some relative of Douglas Cooke — a cousin I think, and her name seemed to me in those days to be almost as beautiful as herself:— Miss Anna Daun (or Dawn), When I left Elgin I used to wonder whether I should ever see her again, and whether any other relations would ever exist between us than teacher and pupil. I suppose I was rather a romantic fellow in those days, and no one would be more surprised than she herself if she could know the thoughts that she conjured up in me. I don't believe she even knew that I admired her. At all events I have never seen her since the day of the presentation nor have I heard of her, from or from her, until now-when she writes her name as “ Mrs. Acklone ”, and refers to her grandchildren ! She says “We have four children grown up and I am a granny! Our elder son lives in Canada — Halifax, N. S. He has had a school there but has just given it up owing to bad health chiefly, and is on his way home to visit us. Our naval son is now on his way out to the States. He is in the scientific branch, a torpedo Lieut., and has for some years been Superintendent of the Torpedo Factory at Woolwich as well as Assistant Superintendent of the Royal Gun Factory, and is going out on Government business. I know it would be a great pleasure to him to meet so

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celebrated a scientist as yourself, and I am therefore taking the liberty of sending him an introduction to you which I trust he may have the opportunity of presenting. He is to stay at the Manhattan Hotel, 42nd Street, New York”.

Mrs. Acklone — or rather Anna Daun as I prefer to think of her says that her life has been spent in India or at least 28 years of 6 it but that her husband retired from the Indian service in 1900 and they have settled down in a little home in Surrey (43 Somers Road, Reigate, Surrey, England). She wrote from Elgin where she was visiting her cousins Mrs. McKay and Miss Cooke, and where she met Mrs. White who told her of our visit to the Island of Guernsey. She says:— “I have often thought of you and wonder ed where you were? You will forgive my ignorance, that I was quite unaware of your identity with Edison and Bell of world-wide fame, and believe that the discovery has been a great pleasure to me”. She does not say anything about Dr. White. I wonder whether he is still alive?

This letter has quite stirred up the little sentiment there is in me, and my thoughts are away back in the old Elgin days. I presume that this Miss Cooke to whom she refers must be the sister of Douglas Cooke. Although it is doubtful whether my Miss Cooke can have retained her name unchanged for she was a very beautiful and attractive girl when I knew her. I should have thought she also would have been a grandmother by this time.

I will reserve the rest of this letter for my own hand writing.

In case of accidents I better sign here now and reserve my own handwriting for a separate note

Your loving husband Alec.